

Remarks

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that claims 13, 14, 22, and 23 are directed to allowable subject matter. Additionally, in the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 6-12, 15-21, and 24-25 based on U.S. Patent No. 5,937,392 to Alberts ("Alberts"). More particularly, the Examiner contends that claims 6, 7, 9-12, 15, 16, 18-21, 24, and 25 are anticipated under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) or, alternatively, obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Alberts and that claims 8 and 17 are obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Alberts.

By this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 6, 10, 13, 15, 19, 22, and 24 to more clearly define the present invention. Claims 6-25 are presently pending before the Examiner.

For the following reasons, Applicants respectfully traverse the claim rejections based on Alberts.

Alberts is directed to a banner advertising display system that includes ad frequency information that specifies how often each ad is to be displayed. Alberts additionally discloses that certain ads can be displayed in response to "trigger information" that indicates under what circumstances to select an ad. (Alberts, col. 3, lines 46-48). According to Alberts, information selected by a user can be used to "infer that the user has a particular interest, e.g., if a user searches a business directory for a business in a particular category, such as photography or skiing." (Alberts, col. 7, lines 15-18). These inferences could be

used to trigger certain ads, such as ads relating to skiing. (Alberts, col. 7, lines 18-27).

The present invention, as recited in amended claim 6, for example, is directed to a method for targeting advertisements that includes, among other things, associating at least one category with documents that may be retrieved and associating at least one supercategory with multiple categories. In response to a data query, at least one supercategory is determined, and an advertisement associated with the supercategory is displayed.

In contrast to the invention recited in claim 6, Alberts merely discloses displaying certain banner ads in response to information received from a user. As one example of this, Alberts' states that if a user searches through a particular category of a business directory, then Alberts' infers that the user may be interested in ads relating to that business category. (Alberts, col. 7, lines 14-17). Alberts, however, completely fails to disclose or suggest associating supercategories with multiple categories. Because Alberts fails to disclose supercategories as recited in claim 6, Alberts necessarily does not disclose or suggest determining a supercategory based on at least one term of a data query and the categories of the supercategory, and displaying an advertisement associated with the supercategory.

The supercategories defined in claim 6 are associated with advertisements and provide significant advantages when displaying banner ads. As described in the present specification, at pages 146 and 147, the number of defined categories can be large (e.g., over seventeen thousand). Associating an

ad with each category can therefore be a time consuming and laborious process. Also, because advertisements often include time-sensitive material, they are changed frequently, meaning that the ongoing process of assigning ads to individual categories could be very difficult.

The Office Action contends that Alberts teaches using a geographic area as a “supercategory” and that Alberts therefore inherently discloses features related to a supercategory as recited in claim 6. Applicants strongly disagree. Although Alberts may disclose categories based on geography, Alberts completely fails to disclose associating a supercategory with multiple categories and displaying an advertisement associated with the supercategory. At most, Alberts merely discloses associating certain ads with a particular category that a user may search. Alberts neither associates multiple categories with a supercategory nor does Alberts display advertisements based on a supercategory. Accordingly, Alberts would not gain the significant advantages mentioned in the previous paragraph. Thus, if Alberts were to define a large number of categories, associating advertisements with the categories would be a laborious process.

Claim 6, as amended, additionally recites “determining a first of said at least one supercategory based on at least one term of said data query and said multiple categories of the at least one supercategory.” This also results in significant benefits because, as stated in the specification, a problem associated with matching advertisements directly to categories is that additional information about a user’s preferences may be available from the user query. However, a

system that relies only on categories ignores any information from the user query that might permit further refinement of the advertisement selection.

(Specification, page 146, line 19 to page 147, line 2).

Alberts appears to disclose inferring an advertisement to display based on a user's explicit selection of a category. (Alberts, col. 7, lines 14-26). Alberts, however, does not disclose or suggest determining a supercategory based on a term of a data query and on the categories of the supercategory, as recited in claim 6.

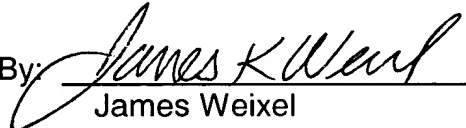
For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that Alberts fails to disclose or suggest the present invention as recited in claim 6, and therefore, the rejection of this claim should be withdrawn. Independent claims 15 and 24 recite features similar to those recited in claim 6, and therefore, based on similar rationale, the rejection of these claims should also be withdrawn. The rejection of dependent claims 7-12, 16-21, and 25, at least by virtue of their dependency on one of independent claims 6, 15, and 24, should also be withdrawn.

In addition, the dependent claims include additional features not disclosed or suggested by Alberts. For example, claim 7 additionally recites ranking more than one supercategory to determine a first supercategory. As discussed above, Alberts fails to disclose a supercategory as recited in the claim 1. Accordingly, Alberts cannot disclose or suggest ranking of a supercategory as recited in claim 7. For this reason, in addition to those given above, the rejection of claim 7 should be withdrawn. Dependent claim 16 recites features similar to claim 7, and is thus also not disclosed or suggested by Alberts.

Dependent claim 10 depends from claim 6 and additionally recites ranking documents in accordance with terms occurring in the data query and terms occurring in the multiple categories of the first supercategory. Alberts completely fails to disclose any such ranking of documents. For this reason, in addition to those given above, the rejection of claim 10 should be withdrawn. Dependent claim 19 recites features similar to claim 10, and is thus also not disclosed or suggested by Alberts.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration of this application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 07-2339 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

By: 
James Weixel
Reg. No. 44,399

Date: 6/8/2001

Verizon Services Group
600 Hidden Ridge, HQE03H01
Irving, Texas 75038
781/466-2220

Attachment: Marked-up version of claims

VERSION WITH MARKINGS OF CLAIMS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

6. (Amended) A method executed in a computer system for targeting advertisements comprising:

associating at least one category with documents that may be retrieved, said category including at least one term;

associating at least one supercategory [with at least one category] with multiple categories;

associating an advertisement with at least one of said supercategories;

determining at least one term associated with a data query;

determining a first of said at least one supercategory [in accordance with] based on at least one term of said data query and said multiple categories of the at least one supercategory [at least one category]; and

displaying an advertisement associated with said first supercategory.

10. (Amended) The method of Claim 6, further including:

ranking said documents in accordance with terms occurring in said data query and terms occurring in said [at least on category] multiple categories of the first supercategory.

13. (Amended) The method of Claim 6, further including:

forming a banner ad term list, each element in said banner ad term list including terms of said first supercategory and terms of said [at least one category] multiple categories associated with said first supercategory;

wherein said banner ad term list is managed by a dedicated server included in said computer system.

15. (Amended) A computer program product for displaying advertisements comprising:

machine executable code for associating at least one category with documents that may be retrieved, said category including at least one term;

machine executable code for associating at least one supercategory [with at least one category] with multiple categories;

machine executable code for associating an advertisement with at least one of said supercategories;

machine executable code for determining at least one term associated with a data query;

machine executable code for determining a first of said at least one supercategory [in accordance with] based on at least one term of said data query and said multiple categories of the at least one supercategory [at least one category]; and

machine executable code for displaying an advertisement associated with said first supercategory.

19. (Amended) The computer program product of Claim 15, further including:

machine executable code for ranking said documents in accordance with terms occurring in said data query and terms occurring in said [at least on category] multiple categories of the first supercategory.

22. (Amended) The computer program product of Claim 15, further including:

machine executable code for forming a banner ad term list, each element [in] of said banner ad term list including terms of said first supercategory and terms of said [at least one category] multiple categories associated with said first supercategory [;], and

wherein said banner ad term list is managed by a dedicated server included in said computer system.

24. (Amended) An apparatus for displaying advertisements comprising:

means for associating at least one category with documents that may be retrieved, said category including at least one term;

means for associating at least one supercategory with [with at least one category] with multiple categories;

means for associating an advertisement with at least one of said supercategories;

means for determining at least one term associated with a data query;

means for determining a first of said at least one supercategory [in accordance with] based on at least one term of said data query and said multiple categories of the at least one supercategory [at least one category]; and

means for displaying an advertisement associated with said first supercategory.